



Health and Safety Policy

Introduction

The following document details Off Book's procedures for assessing health and safety issues during a production. It is designed to inform you as a performer and keep you aware of what we do as producers in order to try and keep you safe when working. Much of this policy has been pulled together from the HSE and Equity's guidance documents. We would ask that you take the time to read this document fully because as a self-employed performer you are responsible for your health and safety. Off Book does everything it can to reduce any risks, but ultimately if you fail to report or flag up any issues that you feel are a risk there is nothing we can do to minimise this risk. We would also like to highlight the importance of Equity and inform you that we assume that performers are members of Equity and technical/backstage personnel are members of BECTU. Unions are even more important as a self-employed person and you can find a lot of details about how to keep yourself safe from your union.

Common Sense

A lot of health and safety advice is what could be termed common sense. If you cannot ride a bicycle and you are asked to then you should tell the producer or director so that they can either find you someone to teach you how to ride safely or remove the need for you to ride a bicycle. If something is beyond your experience you should tell us so that we can resolve that issue. If something you are asked to do, or that you observe looks to be unsafe then there are two pieces of advice:

1. Don't do it/don't let someone else do it.
2. Tell the producer or director **why** you feel it to be unsafe so that it can be resolved.

Fire & Evacuations

Off Book presents shows in many different locations. As such it is very difficult to detail a complete fire procedure for every show and every venue. Instead, we have concluded that our best option is to ensure that our performers and crew are familiar with the procedures in each venue. As such part of your briefing at the beginning or rehearsals and/or when arriving at a venue for the first time will be to detail the fire evacuation procedure. Off Book's director/producer will always maintain an 'In and Out' sheet which details the times performers arrive at and leave venues. It is important to ensure that you are signed in or out with the person responsible in case of evacuation as they will be notifying the venue and/or the fire services whether all company members are accounted for at the assembly point.



In addition to being aware of the venue's evacuation procedure, we ask that all company member ensure that they never block any fire escapes in a venue. Fire escapes are there for a reason, and even in a space with multiple fire escapes there is **never** a reason to block one. If you arrive at a venue and the venue operators have an escape that is blocked this should be reported, by the Producer or Director to the venue liaison. If a member of the company blocks the escape, they should be told to immediately remove the blockage and clear the fire escape.

First Aid

Off Book will **always** keep a first aid kit stocked according to HSE guidelines and available for use. The Producer or Director will always inform you where the first aid kit is. The kit can be used for any level of injury including minor cuts. Our policy is that the first aid kit is there to be used. We do ask however, that you record what is used (over and above plasters) so that we are able to keep the kit fully stocked at all times. This is done by recording the item used and it's reason on an incident report.

Most venues should have a responsible first aider and Off Book will always ask the venue contact and inform you who the first aider is. Once again, though we do ask that you take a certain amount of responsibility and ask if you are not clear on who is responsible for first aid.

Martin Williams is the appointed first aider, having completed a First Aid at Work qualification with St. John's Ambulance.

Security

Not all venues will have secure dressing rooms or places to leave personal effects or valuables. We therefore have put the responsibility onto you to not bring any valuables with you. Any valuables that you do carry with you are at your own risk.

We present all cast and crew with ID badges that feature their name, photo, role and the Off Book logo. We ask that all company members wear their ID badges at all times when not in costume and/or performing. We operate a no entry policy if you are not wearing your badge. We understand that in smaller companies everyone will know each other, but we feel that this is a sensible policy to put in force as when we visit venues none of our cast and crew will be held up unnecessarily when asking for entry into any restricted area.

Temperature

No-one likes performing when it is too hot or too cold. Sadly, due to us touring to different venues it is not always possible for us to control the temperature. We will always ask venues to ensure that the temperature is never lower than 16 degrees Celsius though. If the temperature is lower than this, or you feel that it is too cold, please notify either the producer or director and they will speak the the venue contact to request the temperature is raised. In the event of hot weather, there is much less



that we can do and we have no guidance available from the HSE on upper temperature limits. Our best advice is to always ensure that you have a ready supply of water to keep hydrated. If at all possible, we will also try to provide mini-fans for use when not performing as a way of cooling you down.

Weather

Off Book has done many shows outdoors and has come across many weather conditions. Including heavy rain, midsummer sun and even snow. Unfortunately, sometimes our shows have been cancelled. Ultimately, the producer or director for Off Book will make a decision on whether or not to perform the show. In the event of rain, snow or ice we ask that you keep yourself aware of the cold and the slip hazard. Usually, we will not perform a show if the weather means that there is an increased slip or trip risk. This will be something that we discuss with our cast and crew and will usually attempt to find a sheltered area or indoor area to perform in instead. This is something that you must also take responsibility for though. If you feel that you are increased risk of injury or even colds/flu etc you should discuss the matter with the Director or Producer.

In the event of sunny weather, Off Book will try and ensure that our cast and crew are in the shade as much as possible. We will also endeavour to ensure that water is freely available. It remains however, your responsibility to ensure that you stay well hydrated and that you apply sun cream. Performing in sunny weather can be very enjoyable, but even in some patches of shade, or cool wind it does not negate the need for sun protection and hydration. Please take responsibility for your own well being.

Working at Heights

We try not to build sets that include working at heights, but on occasion a performer may be asked to stand on rostra or similar structures. In this event, Off Book will have already carried out a risk assessment for this and will ensure that the structure is safe and secure. If you feel that you have been asked to stand or climb or work at any height off the ground and it is unsafe, then we ask that you tell us so that we can make adjustments. You will **never** be asked to work at any height higher than 1m off the ground. We advise that you take a look at guidelines drawn up either by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) or your union (Equity, BECTU etc).

Working and Contact With Animals

Off Book has done shows at farms and similar locations where animals are present. It is therefore **essential** that you inform us of any allergies or issues you have being around animals so that we might understand what measures might have to be put in place. We will do our best to try and minimise any contact with animals. We will also attempt to ensure that you are informed by a responsible and trained person on how to interact with the animal and its usual behaviours. We would usually advise that any interaction with animals is as minimal as possible to ensure the animal's welfare.



Working With Young People

We have a separate document that details any dealings with schools or other similar institutions. As a general rule though, you should ensure that there is always a responsible adult present (parent, guardian, teacher, chaperone etc). For your own piece of mind you should **never** find yourself in a situation where you are alone with any child or young person. Even when accompanied by a responsible adult you should also keep all appropriate physical contact to an absolute minimum. There are guidelines that you should make yourself aware of published by the HSE and Equity. We strongly advise you to look at this information and make yourself familiar with it. We would also ask that you read our separate document dealing with shows in schools etc. As it also details things like safeguarding.

Bullying and Violence

Off Book operates a no tolerance policy when it comes to violence or bullying of any kind. Any cast or crew member found to be bullying or displaying violent behaviour will have their contracts cancelled immediately. We ask that any member of crew or cast contacts the Producer or Director immediately. Any complaints will be handled in confidence. If you feel uncomfortable in this, please consider contacting either your union (Equity) or the HSE for information on what you as a self-employed person can do. Equity's confidential number for members is: 020 7670 0268.

Costumes, Makeup, Set and Props

When costumes are supplied for actors to wear we will always make sure that all items have been washed correctly. If you have concerns over the hygiene of a costume please speak to the director or producer immediately. The solution may be as simple as washing the item again, or wearing a base-layer beneath your costume to protect yourself.

When makeup is required by the product, actors should ensure that they are using clean applicators and never sharing such items. If you are aware of any allergy that you have to any ingredients in makeup you should always notify us and check the ingredients in makeup yourself.

Our sets are generally small and lightweight. If you are asked to carry any items you should never carry more than you are able and should speak up if asked to. You can find good guidelines on handling equipment and loads on the HSE's website at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/faq-manhand.htm> As every set has it's own individual requirements, you will also be given more specific advice on working around each set and it's potential risks and how to manage them. We will always ensure that there are no sharp, jagged, rough or loose edges or items



on the set. Should you see a problem with a set, or anything you believe to be dangerous, please contact the producer or director to voice your concern so that it can be dealt with correctly.

Smoking and Substances

Off Book asks actors not to smoke. A lot of venues that we tour too (even outdoor ones) have a no smoking policy on their grounds. Therefore, we expect all cast and crew not to smoke on any premises that we tour too. Aside from the litter and fire hazards that smoking represents in many of our venues, we have also been made aware that the slightest waft of smoke on clothing can have adverse health issues for people with asthma and similar respiratory conditions. We have had team members have severe asthma attacks in the presence of smokers we do not think it is right to risk that in the future.

Off Book also has a no tolerance policy for those using illegal substances. Anyone who is found to be using any illegal substances will have their contracts terminated immediately.

Finally, we would like to remind you that if you have any prescription medication, you should do your best to keep them secure and out of the reach of anyone else. Ideally, any medications will be kept in a locked vehicle unless or until they are required.

Accident Reporting

There is a requirement for records to be kept in the event of accidents. Usually the *Accident and Incident Record Forms* will be kept in either the production report file and/or with the first aid kit. In the case of any accident or incident one of these forms should be completed as soon as possible. For information on anyone injured as the result of an accident you should contact your union or the HSE to find out what to do next. Off Book may also have to file a report with the venue depending on the policies of the venue as well as copying the record to the show or rehearsal report. In order to reduce the chance of accidents, we ask that all cast and crew consider carrying out a checklist (an example of which is below). Once again though we must ask that you as a self-employed person consider your own safety and tell us if you feel something is likely to cause an accident or injury. We can't fix or prevent problems that we aren't aware of.

Avoiding Accidents Checklist

- Warm up/down both voice and body to reduce the chance of physical injury
- If you feel your safety is compromised contact the producer or director
- Do not do anything beyond your abilities or which you have not been trained to do
- All passageways, stairs and any areas which receive foot traffic are clearly marked and free of obstruction.

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- There are no holes in the floor (or if there are holes they are clearly marked and safeguarded)
- If you feel you have not been given adequate training to carry out an activity speak to someone immediately.
- All props and costumes should be stored correctly. Untidiness can be a hazard, so ensure that props are returned to their table/storage and costumes are placed tidily backstage to prevent such hazards.
- It is rare that we ask actors to use any electrical equipment, but when we do, all items will be checked for safety. A record of these checks will be available on request. You can find more information on visually checking yourself from both the HSE and Equity.

Links

BECTU Health and Safety Guidance:

<https://www.bectu.org.uk/get-involved/health-and-safety>

Equity's Health and Safety Guidance:

<http://www.equity.org.uk/members-area/member-resources/health-and-safety/>

Health and Safety Executive Self Employed Information:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/self-employed/>